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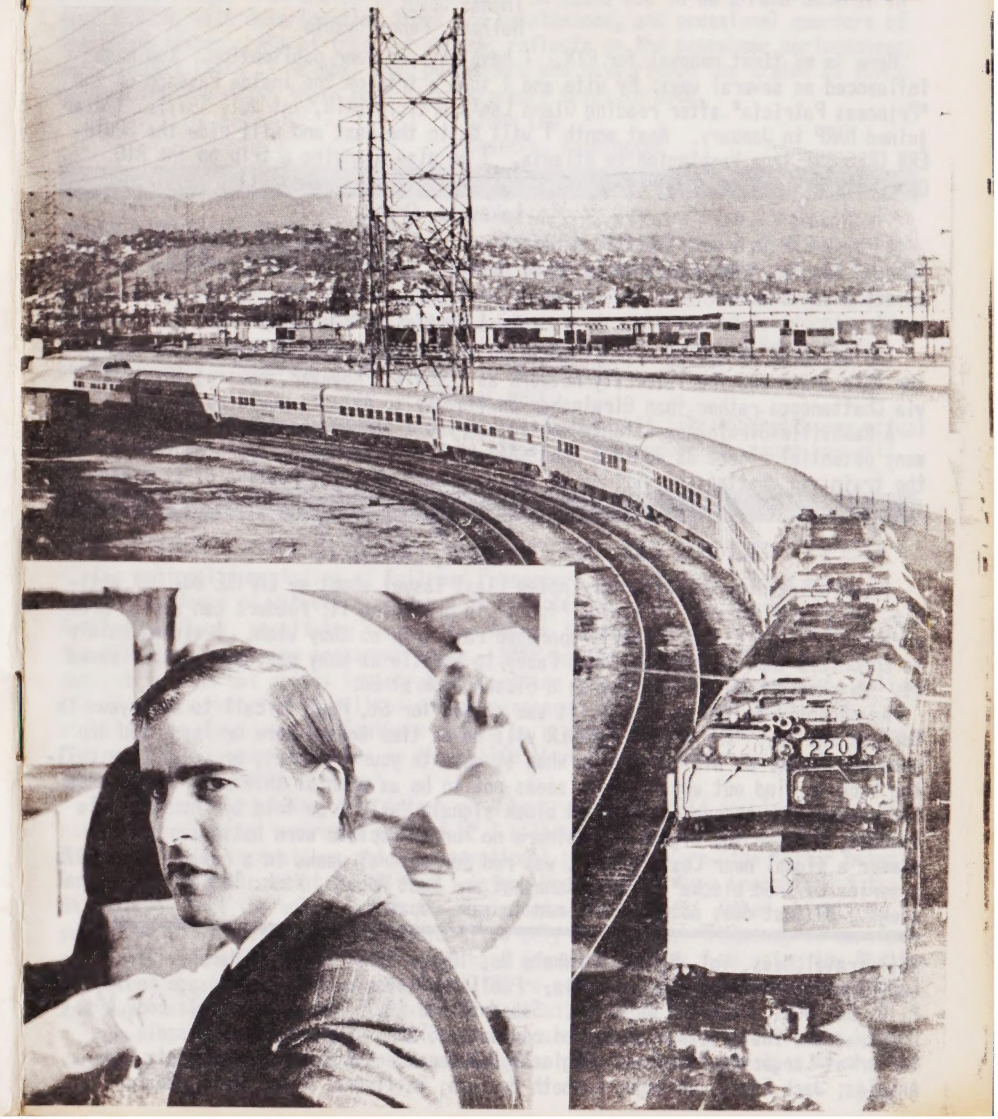
VOL. 8 NO. 3
FIRST ISSUE OF
MARCH 1978
#169

THIS ISSUE FOLLOWS THE SECOND JANUARY ISSUE



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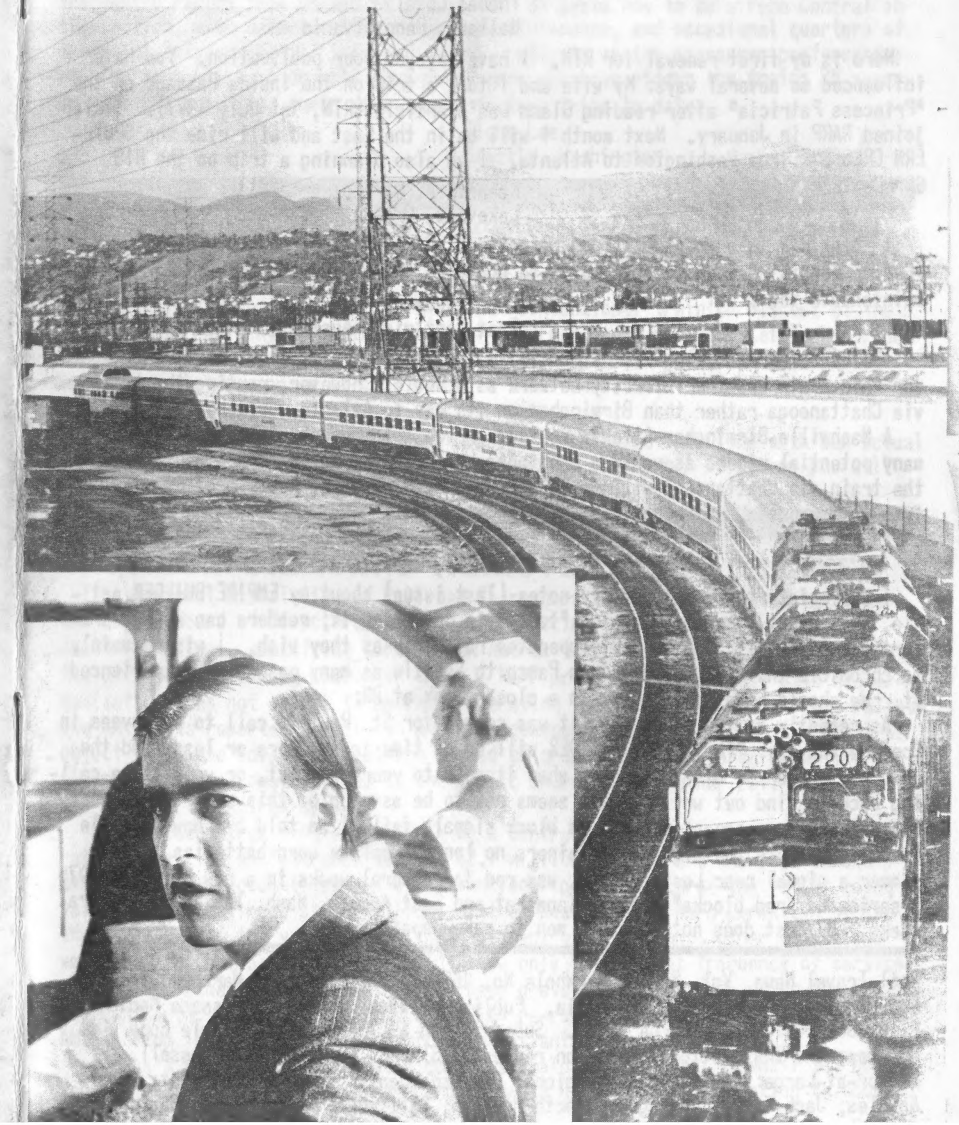

LETTERS

In this time of Amtrak financial crises and passenger train horror stories, consider the following fantasy:

A passenger train running daily in two sections over a route in excess of 1000 miles, with all equipment sparkling clean and all on-board staff in cheerful, gracious moods. Imagine this train traveling over smooth roadbed, running on time with all heat and air conditioning functioning perfectly in all cars. Imagine two dining cars and two lounge cars on each section, including a piano bar and a wide selection of beverages and food available to delight the most discriminating patron. And just when you end this fantasy and long for the good old days, take heart--buy a ticket on Amtrak's SILVER METEOR from New York to Florida, sit back and relax, and you'll find that all the above is a glorious reality.

Thomas Coval
Holland, Pennsylvania

Here is my first renewal for RTN. I have enjoyed your publication. You have influenced me several ways: My wife and I took a trip on the Inside Passage on the "Princess Patricia" after reading Glenn Lee's article (RTN, 1st July 1977). I also joined NARP in January. Next month I will be in the East and will ride the SOUTHERN CRESCENT from Washington to Atlanta. I am also planning a trip on the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR.

Kenneth A. Burkholder
Lakeview, Oregon

I think RTN is a great little publication. Certainly you should retain the "Cars & Consists" section. Would it be possible to publish Amtrak's roster of maintenance vehicles?

E. R. Godwin
East Bentleigh, Australia

The upcoming rerouting of the FLORIDIAN thru Atlanta will be a positive change for this train and the intercity network as a whole. However, routing the train via Chattanooga rather than Birmingham on its way to Atlanta would be unwise.

A Nashville-Birmingham-Atlanta routing serves a larger population--2.2 times as many potential riders as would a Chattanooga route. Economically, a routing of the train via Chattanooga will do in the Southeast what the routing of it away from Indianapolis has accomplished in the Midwest.

James Hal Selzer, Jr.
Slidell, Louisiana

I appreciate the complimentary notes (last issue) about my EMPIRE BUILDER article. My intent was not to assign "fault" in preparing it; readers can assign proportions of "fault" for a poorly-operated rail trip as they wish. I wished mainly to chronicle the long journey from Pasco to Seattle as many passengers experienced it. We should have an interest in a closer look at BN:

As recently as ten years ago, it was common for St. Paul to call to employees in Montana and say: "The EMPIRE BUILDER will be on time today, more or less, and the snow had better be off the tracks when it gets to your district, or we will be calling back to find out why." There seems not to be as much of this under BN as under its predecessor companies. The BN block signals fail, I am told by knowledgeable sources, because the signal maintainers no longer replace worn batteries. Last summer a signal near Lester, Wash. was red for several weeks in a row. In Jan 1975 a series of "red blocks" between Kanaskat and East Auburn, Wash. lasted for several weeks. BN just does not have the men to make repairs.

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The washout on Stampede Pass was entirely predictable. In 1967-69, under Lou Menk's presidency, NP forces experienced many difficulties where the washout took place in 1977. The road crews repeatedly asked St. Paul for funding to make changes at the danger area, including measures such as enlarged culverts. St. Paul said "no" so many times to these requests that the area is now called "No-No Creek" by the road gangs. BN may have wanted a washout, as the current BN Motive Power Annual carries an article on Stampede Pass, prepared early in 1977, saying that abandonment was a possibility.

There were only 7 trains per week Seattle-Chicago this last Christmas season compared with 14 one year before. For the money saved, surely Amtrak could have operated a "make-up train" Spokane-Seattle on days that the trains were late coming thru Montana, so the short-distance business could be served. This was not done.

Norm Lorentzen, 61, has recently become president and chief executive officer of BN. This could improve matters at BN, where management in the past has all too frequently ranged from uneven to eccentric. BN seems now to be a Penn Central in slow motion, with deteriorating track and maintenance, and occasional quarters of operating losses. All of this, of course, reflects on the passenger performance; and the fact (like it or not) that passengers who have ridden the trains 25 years or more ARE reporting their most unsatisfactory trips to date.

Glenn Lee
Seattle, Washington

ON THE COVER

Valentine's Day Train: the long-awaited EL CAMINO on the SAN DIEGAN line makes its first regular departure from L.A. on Feb 14. With engines 220 and 528 pulling, the 8-car conventional train curves out of the city in this Paul Rayton photo. (Inset:) Governor Jerry Brown of California rides in the dome of the northbound inaugural train on Feb 14. Photo by Peter Bretz. See our complete coverage of this event in this issue.

SPECIAL NOTE:

The cover date of this issue has been updated to bring it into line with our actual publication schedule. This will have no effect on the number of issues you will receive on your subscription.

SOUTHERN CRESCENT TAKEOVER TO BE DELAYED

The National Association of Railroad Passengers has endorsed action taken by the Amtrak Board of Directors on Mar 1 in rejecting a contract proposed by the Southern Railway, specifying terms of an Amtrak takeover of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, the SR's last remaining passenger train. NARP president Orren Beaty said his organization does not object to Amtrak's operating the train, nor to Amtrak's relieving SR of its reported $7 million annual passenger deficit. Said Beaty: "What we object to is the idea that Southern should be granted special terms exempting the railroad from responsibilities to the public shared by all other railroads that are part of the Amtrak system."

SR had been bargaining with Amtrak on a contract that would involve paying the rail corporation an "entrance fee" of $2.7 million in cash and the rest in equipment--17 E-type locomotives and 81 conventional passenger cars--the latter being valued by the railroad at $4 million. Amtrak Board Member Norm Lorentzen of the BN objected that the value set on the equipment was too high. Other objections were that the proposed contract would allow only the present frequency of service and route of the CRESCENT. This would have prevented Amtrak from using the Chattanooga-Atlanta line as part of the FLORIDIAN re-routing, and would have prevented Amtrak from lengthening daily service from Atlanta to New Orleans.

Amtrak's Board concluded that a contract could not be drawn up until the DOT's zero-base system plan is completed and Congress directs the corporation to operate

the system thus decided upon and agrees to funding for it. Following the Board decision, SR applied (on Mar 6) to the ICC to discontinue the CRESCENT. The ICC has 30 days to decide whether to investigate the application, and then 4 months to reach a final decision on it. Following the Board decision, SR reportedly also agreed to an all-cash buy-in arrangement, but the extent that Amtrak can use the SR lines is still a matter of disagreement.

Amtrak's Board also declared that no re-routings can be made until after the DOT study, because the intent of Congress was to freeze the present network of rail lines until a revised network is agreed upon.

RESTRUCTURING AMTRAK: AN UPDATE

The current timetable for the DOT's "zero-base" restructuring of the Amtrak system is as follows: Preliminary plan completed May 1; ICC hearings held; final plan completed and sent to Congress about the end of Dec 1978. In the meantime, the status quo is expected to prevail concerning routes--no route additions, deletions or re-routings of major proportions (except, of course, for emergencies such as the washed-out BN line in Washington State).

RTN's mail continues to run about 10-to-1 in opposition to the plan of Anthony Haswell (see last two issues).

We do not know what influence the Haswell plan has had on DOT planners who are currently working out Amtrak system proposals. However, according to a Washington Star report of Feb 23, some of his proposals are included in alternate plans the DOT is examining. According to the Star, the proposals being most seriously considered by the DOT are the following:

*Drop the MONTREALER north of Springfield.
*Drop the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL.
*Drop the FLORIDIAN.
*Drop the INTER-AMERICAN (and the LONE STAR?).
*Drop the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA.
*Drop the LAKE SHORE LIMITED east of Cleveland.

*Run a single Chicago-California train (the "CITY OF EVERYWHERE") from Chicago to La Junta; from there one branch would run to Denver, thence via D&RGW to Salt Lake City and Oakland; the second branch would run from La Junta to Tucson, Phoenix and Los Angeles. A branch from Salt Lake might go to Seattle.

*The Sunset Route would be altered to run New Orleans-Houston-Dallas/Ft. Worth-Amarillo and probably Albuquerque to Los Angeles. San Antonio, El Paso, and other Southern Texas cities would be eliminated.

*The PANAMA LIMITED route would run via St. Louis.

*The following "corridors" would appear on the Amtrak map: Northeast Corridor; Los Angeles-San Diego; Chicago-St. Louis; Chicago-Detroit; Chicago-Cincinnati or Indianapolis; Chicago-Milwaukee-Minneapolis. DOT planners are said to be building the Amtrak network around these corridors.

Besides the runs listed above, the following routes presumably remain in the system: New York-Florida; Seattle-Los Angeles; and Washington-Atlanta or New Orleans. Also New York-Chicago (BROADWAY LIMITED). The status of other lines in the DOT plans is not immediately known.

In the critical months ahead, it will be the policy of RTN to keep readers informed of as much vital information on the restructuring as possible. In the event that this means producing special publications such as the Haswell Plan which we published in February, and possibly disrupting or delaying the regular schedule of RTN or of ancillary publications, we will aim for quick distribution of information relating to the Amtrak restructuring, since we deem this to be of top importance.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

VOTERS IN FLORIDA'S Dade County decided not to kill a planned rapid transit system, voting down a referendum measure on Mar 7 by about 51 to 49%.

SEPTA'S PUSH-PULL TRAIN derailed the evening of Mar 3 on the Conrail Reading Division in Norristown PA, with the whole consist of two engines and 5 coaches leaving the rails. Two minor injuries were reported. (Phila. Chap. NRHS)

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY in Chicago announced late in Feb on-time performance information of the 5 major Chicago-area commuter railroads. The ICG ranked first, with over 95% on-time figures, followed by the C&NW, BN, Milwaukee Road, and Rock Island. Data cover the fiscal year 1977.

S·P

AS PREDICTED HERE last issue, the Southern Pacific asked the Public Utilities Commission on Feb 22 for permission to drop all service except that on weekday rush hour times on its San Francisco commute line. The plan to buy new equipment was not a part of the SP proposal, however. SP said that such an arrangement would cut its commute-line deficits by up to 57%--from $8.4 million to $3.6 million per year. The PUC has not yet acted on the SP's earlier request to drop the rail service altogether.

JOHN W. MACMURRAY was named the new chairman of SEPTA at a Feb 22 board meeting, following the ouster of 9-year chairman James C. McConnon, criticized for lack of improvement in the system's performance.

A BART TRAIN stalled in the transbay tube for about an hour on Mar 1. The 3.6-mile tube is said to be the world's longest underwater vehicular tube.

THE PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA bus-streetcar wreck which took four lives Feb 11 happened on a streetcar right of way that had recently been paved to allow joint bus-streetcar operation. The move was the object of much controversy, and deaths were predicted by opponents, among whom was former County Commissioner William R. Hunt. The crash was called the city's third worst--worst was Dec 24, 1917, when 21 were killed in a runaway streetcar wreck near Mt. Washington Tunnel.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA STREETCARS are going to Seattle for use on the downtown waterfront route. One of two of them arrived in Portland Feb 23 aboard the M.V. Allunga. The car will be repaired at Glenwood, OR before delivery to Seattle.

CANADA IS NOT the only place to have a VIA system. San Antonio/Bexar County in Texas, as of Mar 6, has a VIA Metropolitan Transit bus system operating--the first MTA in Texas with taxing power (½% sales tax). Besides adding dozens of routes, the system has brought on a number of new GM-built buses.

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT supporters are alarmed at a proposed 25% budget cut by the NJDOT in the state's public transportation subsidy account, and are asking other supporters to write for increasd funding to Hon. Bernard J. Dwyer and to Hon. Francis J. Gorman, both committee chairmen, at State House, Trenton NJ 08625.

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT BOARD members in San Diego, who are considering buying part of the San Diego and Eastern Arizona Railroad from SP, last month heard Bechtel Corp. consultants describe a possible commuter railway on the line between downtown San Diego and San Ysidro.

THE OPERATOR OF one of the trolleys that crashed in Pittsburgh Jan 23 has been relieved of her job by SEPTA. The agency believes she was at fault, but the matter will be arbitrated.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: 60% of those interviewed in the Dallas area recently were in favor of rail transit for their city..... New York's new mayor persuaded the Transit Authority Jan 28 to lengthen subway trains to their pre-economy size.... Free copy of "Proceedings of the 1st Nat'l Conference on Transit Performance" is available from: Bryan Green, Office of Program Evaluation, UPP-20, UMTA, 400 7th St. SW, Washington DC 20036..... New York governor Carey has been criticized for not planning to save the NYC 50-cent transit fare as he promised.....

Boston's MBTA has cut back trains 25% for at least two months starting Feb 21, due to storm damage, and seeks $3 million in federal aid.....

Rail transit supporters in the Dallas area are asking others to join the fight against a proposed $70.1 million bus transit way in the Dallas-Richardson corridor using the rights of way of the Katy RR thru Highland Park and the SP parallel to Greenville Avenue as far north as Spring Valley Road.

RAIL CANADA

VIA RAIL CANADA President Frank Roberts was quoted recently in the Toronto Star about equipment: "Most of the passenger equipment VIA will inherit from CN and CP is badly in need of refurbishing... The 200-odd stainless steel passenger cars used on the transcontinental runs are as good as new mechanically." He hopes eventually to have them completely redone inside and converted from steam to electrical heat.

CANADIAN RAIL CRITICS are saying that Frank Roberts is being like the "Captain of the Titanic," according to a Toronto Star article. Roberts refutes the charge, says VIA Rail Canada will not sink, and furthermore will have an illustrious voyage.

VANCOUVER B.C. TRANSIT buses were idle Feb 28 and those in Victoria on Mar 1 as labour leaders held "study" sessions with transit workers in preparation for a possible strike.

TRANSPORT 2000'S SASKATCHEWAN office wrote Transport Minister Otto Lang last month, following the Jan 30 rail passenger conference, that "we are not yet convinced that the Federal government has committed itself to the long-term expansion and improvement of passenger rail in Canada." Other comments: "We express our deep concern over suggestions by the President of VIA Rail that the new Crown corporation will implement severe reductions in train service." "There are many indications that VIA Rail will introduce substantial fare increases due largely to pressure from your Ministry for cost recovery." "We are apprehensive about excessive charges by the two major railways to VIA Rail for track usage", etc.

SUMMING UP THE hearings held last summer and fall on Maritimes rail passenger service, a Senator from Nova Scotia said this, which was believed to represent the consensus of the hearings: "We think that in order to preserve (national unity), it is necessary to make our people feel that they are really a part of Canada and that it is worth something to Canada to makethem feel that way... (if you) detract more and more from (passenger train) quality and quantity, then I think you will be contributing to a greater feeling of regional disparity and a lesser dedication to the thought of national unity as a concept which, I think, has basic importance not only to the Atlantic region but to the country as a whole."

DOUBLE DECKER COACHES are now expected to begin service on GO Transit's Lakeshore run on Mar 13.

CITY OF MONTREAL wants to sell its Expo 67 third-rail powered express train. Vancouver transportation committee decided in Feb that that city should not buy the train, as the cost of conversion for use there would be too great.

FREE BUS SERVICE in downtown Vancouver B.C., begun 6 months ago, is called a great success. B.C. Hydro, the operator, says 8-10,000 riders per week use the 5 buses, and more at Christmas time. Merchants pay the majority of the subsidy.

WHEN VIA RAIL Canada takes over service Apr 1, it has promised a 6-month reprieve before deciding which of Vancouver's two rail stations to use. Both CP and CN stations will be used in the interim.

SOME RTN READERS dining at Seattle's Pier 70 on Feb 18 noted that Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL bound for Vancouver was underway without head-end power. Culprit was reported as F40 engine 226, which has suffered other HEP failures recently.

HALIFAX-DARTMOUTH FERRY operators are considering replacing the small "conventional" foot-passenger ferries with new vessels of the "Sea-Bus" design now in use between Vancouver and North Vancouver, B.C.

TORONTO SOURCES SAY that the TTC may divert a portion of its order for 200 new streetcars to the recently-approved Scarborough light rail rapid transit route

THE AMFLEET MONTREALER by Robert Underwood

Tuesday, Feb 28 was the day. Amtrak train 60, the MONTREALER, would arrive in Springfield MA from Washington carrying Amfleet equipment and recently-electrified sleepers. The train had gotten off to a slow start, leaving DC 1:45 late. The jovial B&M conductor held a teletyped consist and a message. The message read: "Train delayed leaving DC because of hotel power failure." What could a power failure in a hotel have to do with the train delay? "Maybe the crew got stuck in the elevator" (laughter). "This is like waiting for the Titanic" (more laughter).

"Look at all these car numbers" said the B&M conductor. "They don't mean a thing to me. We have three coaches, but one is an 84-seater. We're not supposed to have one of them on this train, I was told. And what are 2900 sleepers? I've never had one of those before." I told him that they were 2700-series and they were renumbered when they were rebuilt.

"1:58 late leaving New Haven. At least they'll make it here tonight."

The train was reported 2:03 late out of Hartford. My ticket and those of four other intending passengers were collected in the station. We then went upstairs to track 2, the B&A eastbound track. "There goes no. 61 south across the diamond." It was decided to hold 61 south of Springfield by the old New Haven car washer until after our train arrived and backed out again.

At 3:20am our train arrived, two hours late. The conductor said, "Look at that! No more steam. You can see the platform. No more opening the trap and trying to see the steps."

The consist of this first Amfleeted MONTREALER was F40 engine #200, baggage 1450, sleepers 2989 "Pine Fern" (ex-2717), 2982 "Pine Rapids" (ex-2729), 2987 "Pine Shore" (ex-2732), Amdinette 20209, Amlounge 20111, long distance Amcoaches 21801, 21884, 84-seat Amcoach 21158.

The Amlounge (I call it the Ampub) is configured as coach-cafe-pub. The pub section is similar to the old pubs in that there are small tables with non-swivel chairs grouped around. It looked very nice.

At 3:45am we were backing out onto the "New Haven curve" (the New Haven name still lives in Springfield) and south toward the southbound train, standing in billows of steam that enveloped our rear platform. The crews exchanged greetings. We stopped, and then immediately moved forward.

I chose to sit in the Amcafe where the crew had their office, so I could listen to them and the train radio while I rested my eyes. "Oh gee, these cars are going to take getting used to" I heard the B&M conductor say. "I just sat on the (center) arm rest of the seat. Guess what? These door keys they gave us are like my house key. I tried it and it works. Now I have two keys that work" (laughter).

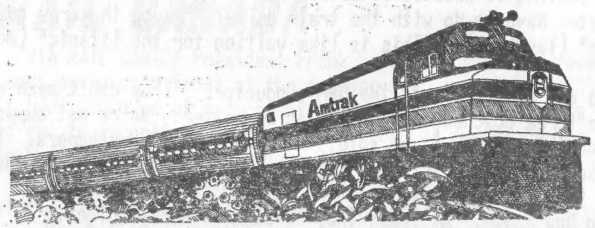
I was awake when we stopped at Northampton, but slept thru "Bratt" (Brattleboro) and didn't wake up until Bellows Falls at 6am. The sky was lightening in the east, and the conductor remarked "Looks like we'll see the sunrise today." And rise it did, on a beautiful day. What a lovely occasion to see this part of the B&M in daylight!

As soon as we left Bellows Falls I walked forward to find everything ready for breakfast. The tables had blue-and-white checkered tablecloths, with a knife, fork and spoon wrapped up in a blue cloth napkin. Each table also had a vase containing two carnations. I was told to sit down anywhere. I picked up a menu with Amtrak arrow and maple leaves on the cover. It was a three-page foldout menu with breakfast, dinner, beverage list, and a MONTREALER Feature--"Soup Etc."

I ordered the $2.85 French Toast, which came on a plastic plate on a plastic tray, served by a genuine waitress. Along with two slices of French Toast there were ham and apple sauce, orange juice, coffee, butter and a 2-ounce glass bottle of Vermont maple syrup from Essex Junction. The food was quite good, and I would definitely order it again. The waitress seemed pleased by my favorable reaction. There were two waitresses in the car, along with a counter man. Also behind the counter was an Amtrak official in a business suit, and was he ever kept busy!

At lunch time I returned to the cafe for a sandwich and milk. The milk came partly frozen, as always. Takeouts are handled only in this car, while all sit-down dining is in the dinette.

White River Junction arrival came at 6:50am--a photo stop! I was not sure how long we'd be here, so I didn't venture too far, but even before I knew it, the Amdoor was closed. But not to worry. The sleeping cars up front were open, and I got on there. Also I had a chance to meet the porter, and this made it possible to do some "Dutch-dooring" later in the trip.



We reached St. Albans at 9:40am (1:40 late) and stopped at the station and then pulled up just enough to clear the crossing. Up front a local fuel truck was waiting, and the thirsty engine was fueled. We departed at 9:55.

We were picking our way across the Missisquoi Bay trestle around 10:25. The bay was completely frozen over, and someone was running across the ice, pacing the train. This would be an ideal spot to photograph the train. I "Dutch-doored" across the bay. Some Amtrak folks came thru and gave me a big greeting while I was at the door.

We stopped at Cantic block station from 10:40 to 10:48 and then pulled up to the trailer that serves as the customs office. We sat there until 11:18 and then got underway. It's a shame the customs boys can't get on at St. Albans and work the train to Cantic.

The CN crew have CN uniforms, not Amtrak uniforms like the B&M and the CV. The conductor said the CN didn't want them to use Amtrak uniforms.

Arrival at Montreal came at 12:35pm (due at 10:45am). The trip had been most enjoyable, but there had been no real festivities, and I saw no TV people at any stops.

After a day in and around Montreal, I was back in Central Station for the 6:10pm departure of the first southbound Am-MONTREALER. I heard a CN person in the station refer to it as the WASHINGTONIAN. Old names die hard. Boarding began at 6:15, and at 6:25 we pulled out. At 6:30 I was in the dinette, ready to eat the tablecloth I was so hungry. I chose the Rock Cornish Hen, which was quite good.

We stopped at Cantic from 7:44 to 7:46, and I was pleased to see the customs boys working the train to St. Albans. But still we sat in St. Albans from 8:28 to 9pm. The customs inspection was still incomplete, and I think the engine was fueled again.

I slept thru some of the stops this trip, as I was really tired by now. I was quite comfortable stretching out in my reclining, legrest seat with mini-pillow--about half the size of regular pillows, but adequate.

We left White River Junction and Bellows Falls 6 minutes late and were exactly on time at Brattleboro. A couple in front of me were just out for the ride, and had tickets to Springfield, but wanted to return the same day, and rather than putting them off in the cold at Northampton, the B&M crew stopped our train in Holyoke and met the northbound, where they transferred with no trouble at all. That was darn nice of them, I think.

We arrived at Springfield, end of my trip, at 3:08am, two minutes early!

* * *

Consist of last conventional (southbound) MONTREALER (lv Montreal Feb 27): engines 423, 403, 446 (E's); bag-dorm 1521, 2798 "Toronto Islands", 2706 "Athens", diner 8300, pub 3301, coaches 5436, 5415, 5681. E. M. Frimbo was reported aboard the first two Amfleet runs.

El Camino

by Peter Putnam Bretz

Baxter Ward's Choo-Choo, named for the Los Angeles County Supervisor who almost single-handedly initiated it, was going to start rolling on the SAN DIEGAN line on Tuesday, February 14 at 5:45am from San Diego. The Santa Fe had long disputed the necessity of operating this train, but finally gave in. And it had been way back on November 17, 1976 that the "shakedown cruise" of the county's refurbished train equipment had taken place (RTN, 2nd Nov 1976).

Amtrak planned to "sneak" the EL CAMINO equipment down to San Diego as train 772, the regular 10:30am SAN DIEGAN, on Monday the 13th--this after holding "open house" on the train for two days (disappointingly, not many people toured the train).

At L.A. station at 9:15am the 13th the last passengers are filtering off the SOUTHWEST LIMITED. An "EL CAMINO - SAN DIEGAN" sign hangs over gate E, which is open. Businessmen types are floating around, some being fitted with bluish name tags showing a streamlined train motif. On the other side of Gate E, young women are serving coffee and donuts. The name-tagged gentlemen are now getting red scarfs and blue-striped railroad hats at another table. Finally, there is a desk where a gentleman is giving car assignments and making out more nametags. A small sign at the donut table reads "ARCO V.I.P. Tour." So Amtrak really wasn't sneaking the EL CAMINO out this morning. The railroad caps carry the ARCO (Atlantic Richfield Co.) logo. Amtrak's Art Lloyd is walking around, checking things out. He waves and disappears down the concourse toward the train.

The 9:35 SAN DIEGAN arrives and mobs of people move past. We trundle up to trainside to inspect the refurbished conventional EL CAMINO equipment. We find: SDP40F engines 510 and 533, both in new striped color scheme; L.A. County cars la103 "La Mirada" (ex-IC 2621, Pullman-Standard 1947), la101 "Sierra Madre" (ex-C&EI 463 "Vermillion Trail", P-S 1948), la106 "Palos Verdes" (ex-Milwaukee tap-lounge 172, Shops 1948), la105 "Los Angeles" (ex-IC 2632, P-S 1947), la102 "Crescenta Valley" (ex-IC 2600, P-S 1940), la107 "Montebello" (ex-Milw tap-lounge 173, Shops 1948), la104 "Santa Monica" (ex-IC 2627, P-S 1947), and la108 "San Fernando" ex-CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR dome observation car (ex-WP "Silver Planet", Budd 1948). The last car carries the drumhead sign "EL CAMINO Service--Los Angeles County".

About a hundred men from ARCO mill about. The last few cars are reserved for them, with regular passengers up front. Train time approaches, and people are boarding. Among them we see County Supervisor Baxter Ward himself, and with him is State Senator and Amtrak Board Nominee James R. Mills. Both wear the ARCO railroad caps and scarfs.

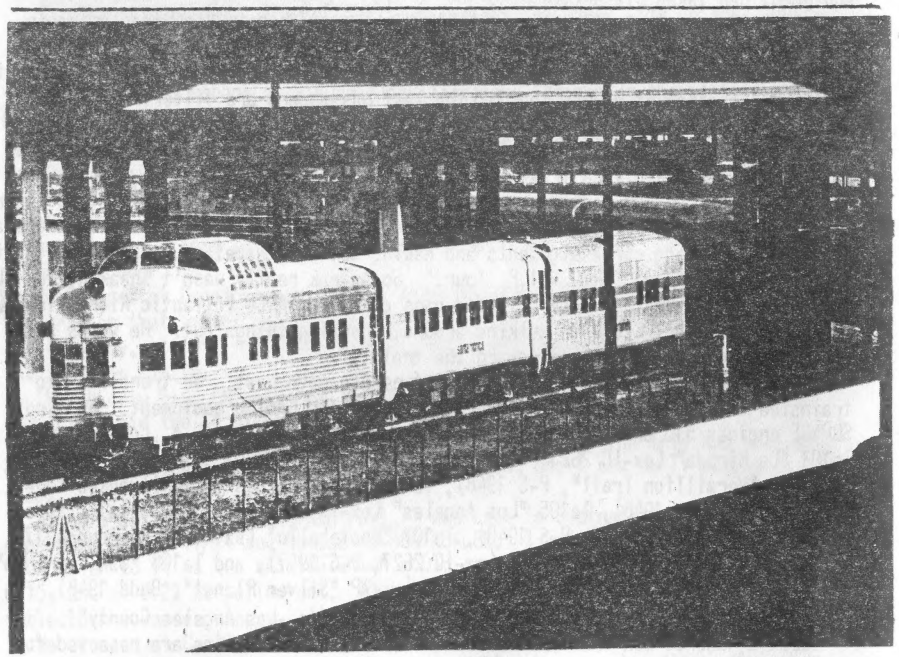
Inside the observation lounge, we claim the seat where the old writing desk was and note again that the solarium seats face backwards (but don't swivel). Plastic glasses full of dry-roasted peanuts are on all the tables. People crowd on and head for the dome. An ARCO man of about 30 remarks, "Why, this is the first time I've EVER been on a train." Another exclaims, "This must be the most elegant short-distance train in existence" (he's probably never been to England). Many satisfied exclamations come from the dome as people experience it for the first time.

We relax for a few moments and peruse one of the complimentary copies of the L.A. Times. The waiter passes out champagne and the music system plays "Third boxcar, Midnight train, Destination Bangor, Maine... King of the Road."

There is a lurch backward at 10:33am, and Baxter Ward's Choo-Choo is off and running. All the officials seem to be in the dome now. Senator Mills sits in

the front seat. Baxter Ward is up there, too. Art Lloyd is passing out souvenir tickets that read "L.A.-San Juan Capistrano." As the train continues backing up a girl asks if this is where the engineer sits. The car becomes more crowded as newsmen pile in. Some criticism of the Santa Fe is heard, as nobody is at the rear of the train as it backs out of the station. A trainman finally appears as we twist along the throat tracks. At the tower we stop, then head out forward, and the ride really begins.

The Rapid Transit District has distributed a packet called "Somebody Wants to Meet You at the Station", containing maps showing all bus stops around Union Station. A young woman now passes out ARCO packets. They contain Amtrak brochures and a pocket SAN DIEGAN timetable, along with an announcement of the train-bus "Gambler's Special" to Tijuana and a letter from T. S. Bradshaw, President of ARCO, welcoming us aboard the V.I.P. Special. He urges ARCO people to report back to



The inaugural train, with the author aboard, makes a sharp left curve under highway pillars as it pulls into Los Angeles. Photo by Paul Rayton.

the company with word on the train service to all employees. ("It is only thru... cooperation of the public that the major problems facing our society today can be resolved. The train...you are riding today is an excellent example of that cooperation.") There are also welcoming letters from Baxter Ward, Senator Mills, and Amtrak President Paul Reistrup for this "Pre-Inaugural Run". Finally, there are a couple of 20% discount fare coupons.

The music system is playing "Love is Blue" as we pass the coach yard. We pick up speed. The music stops and an ARCO official introduces Senator Mills over the train P.A. The Senator says that this train is a considerable advance in the life style of those living in this area. Baxter Ward comes on next, and he and Senator Mills proceed to thank each other for making the train a reality. Ward announces that the dome-observation car used to operate on the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR, that the two bar cars were off the OLYMPIAN HIAWATHA, and that the coaches saw service on the PANAMA LIMITED of the Illinois Central. He hopes seat occupancy will reach 85%.

At Fullerton, regular passengers alight, and we leave at 11:14am. Among the dignitaries on board we see Mr. Fish, General Manager of Santa Fe, and J. L. Cira, Amtrak District Superintendant. Soon we pull into San Juan Capistrano. Here is where all the ARCO people get off, evidently to have a sumptuous lunch at the Train Station restaurant. In three minutes all are off, and we depart for San Diego once more.

We walk forward and inspect the rest of the train. All coaches are actually coach-lounges, similar to "Congo" cars of the Northeast when the Pennsy ran the CONGRESSIONAL and other trains. Also similar to the Northeast Corridor is the presence of Lexan. The dark brown plastic in "Palos Verdes" is already very hard to see thru. The Lexan in the other cars is alright so far. Each car has a different color and pattern of seat fabric. All seats recline, but in the manner of the French Turbos, with only the seat bottoms sliding forward. A Caltrans man remarks that this train costs more to operate than the Amfleet equipment.

Just south of the Del Mar station, the cliff is partly washed away for about 50 yards, and the train creeps along. At one point, the erosion due to recent storms is a mere six feet from the track. Finally, at 1:26 (30 minutes late) the "Pre-Inaugural" gets into San Diego. It's a crisp, bright day. Now it's time to arrange a hotel, and we find that the nearby TraveLodge is not only inexpensive, but our second story window overlooks the train tracks. The EL CAMINO is reassuringly parked next to the station.

The train is opened for visitors after 2 o'clock. A table is well-filled with timetables and brochures at one end, and coffee being served at the other. A smattering of people are floating around. At the first vestibule there are red velvet ropes and a sign propped on an easel: "Welcome to the El Camino -- ENTRANCE." A few people file thru the cars. There are exclamations over the dome-observation. Another set of velvet ropes is at the last vestibule. The lack of a crowd disappoints, and the wind keeps blowing down the entrance and exit signs. By 4pm all is wrapped up and the coffee urn carted away. The train is moved over a few tracks to make way for the 4:30pm Amfleet train. Later, the equipment is turned and is parked away over on the far tracks.

* * *

The rain comes gently down as we arrive at the station in the pre-dawn darkness. The train sits with its lights on, warm and inviting. People with cameras and lights are milling around inside the station or under the arches to keep dry. Here and there, folks tug their suitcases aboard and come back out. There are about 50 soggy-looking folding chairs set facing a lecturn. No one is sitting down. Yesterday we saw some workmen installing overhead quartz lamps, but now there is no power. Someone forgot to bring the generator or a long extension cord. We can see the plug, dangling from the roof.

At about 5:20am the festivities are about to begin, and still no lights, but someone comes up with a bright idea: the San Diego County Maintenance Datsun pickup trucks are swung into motion and shine their headlights on the lecturn. In the lightbeams the rain is very visible. The microphone is on and the loudspeakers work fine.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we apologize for the rain... After brief opening ceremonies we're going to get aboard a nice dry train." Coming out from shelter and shoving some wet chairs away, we stand in the rain. There are lots of newsmen and photographers. People hold Amtrak coffee cups.

Senator James Mills, wearing an ARCO railroad cap from yesterday, begins by saying that this is a day of triumph for Baxter Ward. Baxter Ward is introduced, but his taxi is late and he hasn't arrived yet. Other dignitaries who speak are supervisors from San Diego and Orange County, CalTrans head Adriana Gianturco, George Falcon (editor and publisher of Key Magazine, a member of NARP's Board of Directors, and president of Citizens for Rail California). Falcon presents the Golden Spike award to Baxter Ward, who has finally shown up and he says a few words. Other awards are presented.

During all of this, a large beach umbrella has been thoughtfully provided to protect the speakers from the rain. It sports the logo of American Airlines.

Senator Mills mentions that the L.A.-San Diego corridor is third in Amtrak's system, behind only Philly-Harrisburg and NY-Washington. Also introduced is Amtrak's VP for the Western Region, Neal Owen. After his few words, he directs us to the vestibule of the dome car, where Miss San Diego will cut a red silk ribbon stretched over the doorway. She does it with a huge pair of scissors. Then, from the loudspeakers, "All aboard."

Gratefully, we all troop into the comfort of the EL CAMINO. Right on time at 5:45am we are off. Most of the VIPs head for the dome, but it's still dark outside and the lights are on upstairs. Maybe someone should turn them off? We inquire of trainmen and the lounge attendant, but they hem and haw. Finally, being a little brash, we ask Supervisor Ward if he thinks the lights might be turned off to afford a better view. He does, so we flip the two toggle switches by the stairway, and out go the lights. Most riders expressed pleasant surprise that they could now see so much more, especially since we were now moving up scenic Soledad Canyon.

We lose a little time easing by the washed-out cliff area, and arrive at Del Mar 15 minutes late. Mills and Ward get off, along with film crews. Speeches are made, a scrawny little tree is presented, and off we fly again.

At Oceanside, a brass band is out to welcome us. The rain has stopped now. Conductors try to hurry everyone along, but there are some delays. A banner reads "The Oceanside Ambassadors Greet You." Shaking of hands and greetings. We're 23 minutes late leaving. Back on board, we feel a different atmosphere as we tear along at 70-80mph. Herds of people wander from car to car. First all go one way, then all go another. These are media people, various dignitaries and officials. Every so often we pass a small knot of people and see an interview in progress. We're up in the dome when TV lights are snapped on suddenly, stay on for a few moments, then go off.

In the bar car, there is much eating of Danish pastry and drinking of coffee and looking over promotional material packets. At 7:30 we pull into San Juan Capistrano and pick up a jillion more newsmen, and also State Governor Jerry Brown.

Brown gets on at the front of the train, along with regular passengers, and moves to the forward bar car. When we finally make it thru the mob, we hear him telling the story of the time someone was sent to trackside of the SP line in the San Fernando Valley to see the "clogged" condition due to--as SP said--"too many freight trains to possibly operate a commuter train." In the hours this man sat by the track, not one single train came past--this during the morning rush hour.

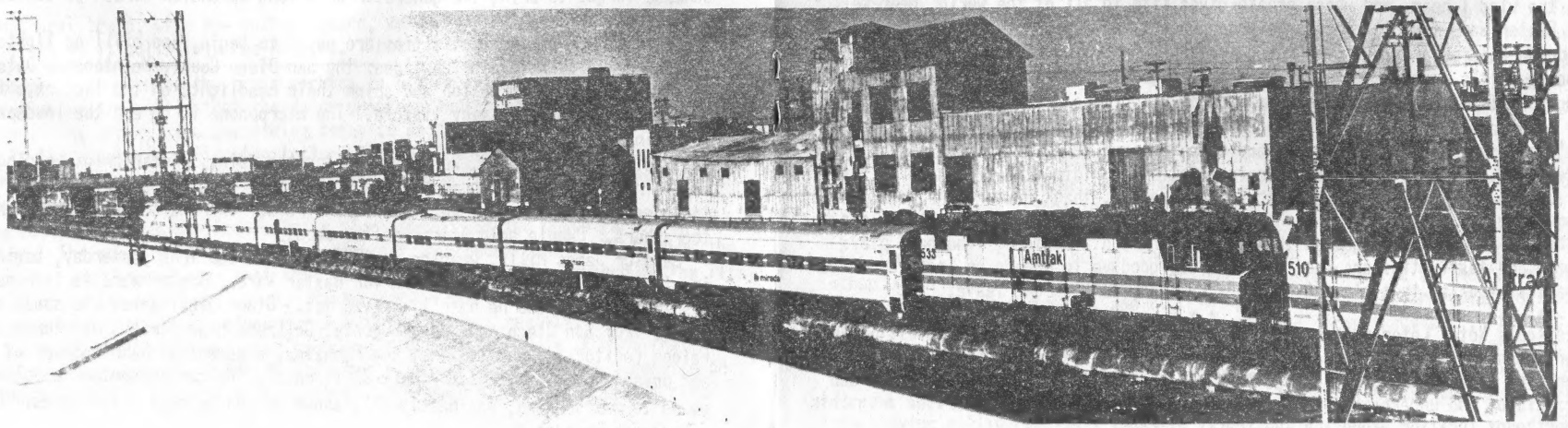
Baxter Ward (left) chats with CalTrans director Adriana Gianturco before first San Diego departure. Photo by Peter Bretz.

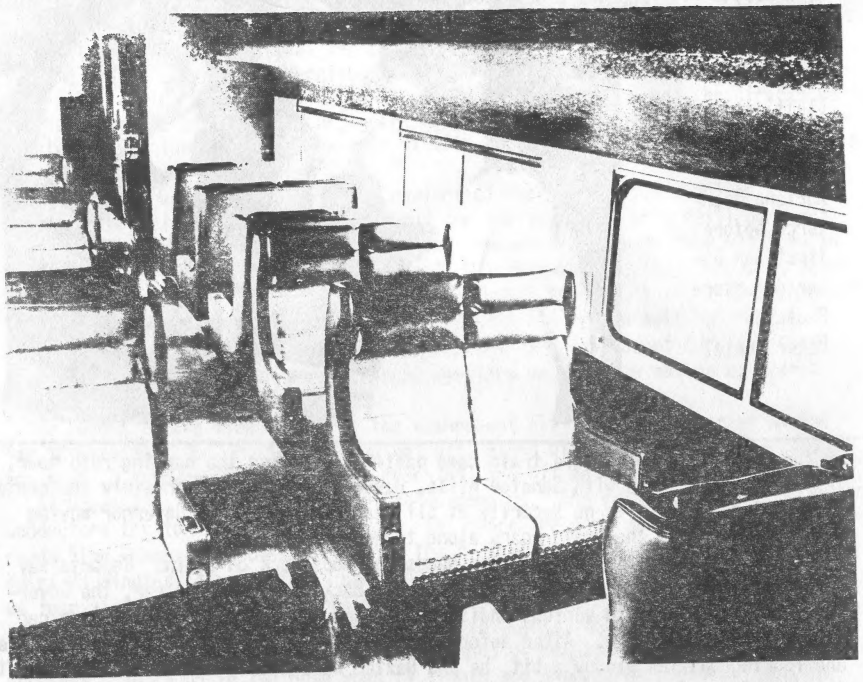
The Governor talks with Senator Mills, Baxter Ward, and is certainly the center of attention. There is no security at all that I can see, the Governor moving from car to car as the train roars along towards Los Angeles.

At Santa Ana, he gets off, shakes hands and pops back on again. Reports say there are 300 passengers and newsmen aboard. Back in the lounge car, the Governor sits and talks with various individuals, then heads for the observation car and sits up in the dome. After autographing a few County of Los Angeles brochures and looking out the window a bit, he and Baxter Ward hold court on the stairway to the dome for a few minutes. Ward comments that of the many dates available for the startup of service, he chose Valentine's Day to represent a little love feast for the Santa Fe Railway. Brown comments that it is a beginning of rapid transit for Southern California, albeit a slow beginning.

At Fullerton, more presentations are made, and lots of first-day passengers join the ride. It is a bright and sunny day now, with white snow visible on the San Gabriel Mountains. We whistle off at 8:21am, 36 minutes behind time. At 8:59am we roll onto LAUPT's track 12, 39 minutes late. (The Los Angeles Times later reported that the Governor's private limousine took the Santa Ana Freeway to Union Station and arrived two minutes ahead of the train--but the car got a

The inaugural train pulls into Los Angeles, alongside the freely-flowing Los Angeles River. Photo by Paul Rayton.





Official publicity photo of refurbished car interior.

head start from San Juan Capistrano and didn't make any stops.)

The "Cougar" band from Franklin High School in Highland Park blares out a greeting to all of us as we detrain. They really sound great. Lights are set up, and there is a podium. Newsmen, film crews, TV mini-cams, photographers--the station is quite crowded and people spill out onto the tracks. The band is across on the next platform.

Arrival ceremonies begin with an Indian Chief decked out in buckskin, moccasins and feathered headdress. He's introduced as "Iron Eyes Cody" and he gives a prayer--in Indian sign language as well as aloud: "Great Spirit, whose voice in the wind I hear, and whose breath gives life to all of the world, hear me..."

Baxter Ward then introduces Governor Brown, who says: "...This is my second ride on CalTrak. This is the third train we're helping to subsidize with the county. It's a small, but very important beginning. Millions of people are coming to this state and the freeways are not going to carry them all. Trains are an important addition... They are cheaper than the automobile. It's pleasant, it's interesting, it's American, and over the next 10-20 years more and more people are going to be hearing the train whistle and riding the trains in California."

Others make comments, pledge their cooperation, thank Baxter Ward, and present more plaques. Everybody seems happy and enthusiastic. Adriana Gianturco smashes a bottle of champagne against the side of car "Santa Monica." The band plays again and festivities are complete. We say goodbye to people we know, and after one last look at that elegant dome observation, we take our leave.

* * *

(Editor's Note: Later reports said that at the conclusion of ceremonies, Governor Brown and aides dashed across the tracks to a small trackside hut, to the surprise of onlookers. Brown was late for a radio talk show appearance in San Francisco, and unbeknownst to listeners he did his telephone interview from this unorthodox location alongside the tracks at LAUPT.)

VIA RAIL CANADA: A DISSENTING VIEW

by Angus M. M. Dundee

There is a dry homily in Canada that much of what goes on is simply that which happened in the USA some ten years before. This repeat seems ready to re-assert itself in the forthcoming birth of VIA Rail Canada, the new corporation vaguely modeled after Amtrak.

Rather than creating a new independent agency to perform passenger train work well, the Ministry of Transport (Transport Canada) has stacked the cards against much success. Transport Canada is making the major decisions, as well as the personnel selections, to ensure continued control by the Minister of Transport himself, Otto (sometimes called "Auto") Lang. Given this unfortunate behind-the-scenes control, VIA Rail Canada has no more hope for doing a good job than had Amtrak, similarly handicapped in the executive suites at its founding.

There has been almost nothing but praise for VIA and VIA's president Frank Roberts. However, Roberts' hands are tied from the outset, as revealed by the following corporate design:

1. The Minister of Transport has a representative on the board of VIA. Given the personality and history of actions of the present Minister, the representative will usually be a puppet calling for reduced passenger train operation so the funds involved can be transferred to air or highway use.

2. Treasury Board, the Canadian equivalent of the USA's Office of Management and Budget, will also have a seat on the board. We can expect continual carping from this seat about passenger "losses". By contrast, rail groups, such as labour organizations, and also consumer groups, have no seat on the VIA board.

3. The Minister of Transport has supplied the head for VIA's Research-and-Development office. This person is almost openly hostile to passenger trains.

4. Many Ottawa sources expect that the Minister of Transport intends to direct the scope of passenger train services, to the extent both of route coverage and of frequency and departure times. Within this context, the Canadian Transport Commission will become the "fall guy" or "bad guy" and will hold the formal discontinuance hearings (and presumably almost always allowing the proposed abandonments) when told to do so by the Minister. Thus a small and closed circle of men at the upper pinnacles of government will have almost complete control over VIA; and there will be none of the balance-of-power that seems to be a part of the system of controls monitoring the Amtrak system in the USA.

5. A recent paper from the Ministry of Transport says, for example, "...There will be a close relationship between capacity and passenger traffic. There will be a more appropriate use of rail technology." This of course is bureaucratic jargon meaning fewer passenger trains. The paper also says, "there will be greater modal integration." This means more buses and fewer trains and presumably with a dash of public relations to help soften the blow.

6. The Ministry of Transport, and not the board (or parliament), will set the minimum amount of passenger train services to be offered, and the service objectives of the routes placed in operation. Under this umbrella, the VIA system is left with the job of contracting with the railways for the service performed, and also for setting fares. Beyond that, VIA is left with not too much to do. The other operations of VIA include monitoring of costs incurred by the railways, contract performance standards, and contract-performance guideline determination. VIA also is expected to study "productivity measures", "cost recovery", "traffic levels", "load factors"--which lead to the inevitable: studies of the possibility of service reduction or discontinuance of passenger train services, hardly the mandate for the improved rail system which Canadians are now being encouraged to expect by the glowing public relations releases from Ottawa.

7. The Ministry of Transport retains as its own prerogative some incredibly important powers, including:

a) Development of corporate plans and financial projections.

b) Final authority over the contractual process, regulations affecting passenger trains, and requests for additional passenger train route coverage.

c) Determination of costing methodology--one of the most "loaded" sections in the entire VIA setup at the present time.

d) Compensation levels to contractors.

e) Final authority over both the operating and capital budgets.

Clearly this concentrates all the power and authority in a very small number of hands. There is no series of checks and balances such as is provided by the Congress in the USA. The situation is analogous to having Amtrak operated almost exclusively as an appendage of the Department of Transportation, with the US Congress given no authority of any kind over passenger train service. The Canadian Transport Commission will in this situation have nominal "independent" authority, but in reality will only serve as a lightning rod for citizen objections.

American publications have so far depicted the situation largely in positive terms, and thus do the situation a disservice. For example, in early February VIA president Frank Roberts in a CBC radio interview said that the only major hope for passenger trains was in the 100-500 mile range. This of course is not Roberts, but Transport Minister Lang speaking. Roberts seems to allude to various types of "improper" control of passenger services by the CTC, whereas in reality the CTC is quite passive regarding passenger trains--much like the USA's Interstate Commerce Commission in the mid- and late-1960s.

Roberts has made other questionable comments in recent months, including:

a) That he will kill all "peripheral" rail services and replace them with buses.

b) That transcon passenger service via Edmonton will be dropped entirely.

c) That the Calgary-Edmonton corridor-type service of CP Rail will be dropped to be replaced by LRC-type service on the Edmonton-Winnipeg portion of the CN transcon line via Saskatoon. This service, of course, offers much less passenger traffic potential, but tends to play along with the present Alberta government, which sees Calgary-Edmonton trains as competition for the provincially-owned PWA airline system.

Morale among VIA employees is reportedly low, as they feel handicapped by both the Ministry of Transport and the VIA managers' willingness to go along with these unfavourable terms.

Among the saddest of situations seems that of Garth Campbell, probably by far the most talented passenger train executive in Canada. Campbell has been to a great extent responsible for the relatively good functioning of the present CN services. It is expected that once the switch to VIA is made, Campbell's influence will be diminished, and CN service will begin to deteriorate along the lines of Amtrak's--that is, we will see "FLORIDIAN" situations all too frequently in Canada, and the good service of the major trains will deteriorate like that of the SUPER CHIEF, now known as the SOUTHWEST LIMITED.

For example, Frank Roberts already is demanding that dining car menus be reduced in scope and prices increased. Fares, including those both for tour groups and for major corridors will go up, with no increase in service. Roberts has reportedly indicated that the ten new LRC sets will be assigned 3 to the Maritimes, 2 to Montreal-Quebec City, and 5 to the West. There will thus be no new equipment for the Montreal-Toronto-Windsor corridor (including Ottawa and Sarnia), where by far the greatest patronage lies waiting. Roberts is often depicted as a crusty old crusader promoting passenger trains with great zeal. However, all to frequently the "line" is that of the Minister of Transport on whom Roberts depends for his job. The full truth probably will not emerge until after VIA has been at work for several years; and then for many communities, like Las Vegas, Nevada in the USA, it may well be too late.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE EL CAMINO'S inaugural in Southern California, described in this issue, was accompanied by a statement from County Supervisor Baxter Ward that the train, which is on a 6-month trial run now (with $375,000 County and $250,000 state funding), might be shifted to run Santa Barbara to L.A. after that time, the SP willing (and so far the SP is very unwilling), with Amtrak replacing the EL CAMINO equipment with regular Amfleet cars. Tho the SP is very worried about passenger or commuter trains running on its tracks thru the San Fernando Valley, it is apparently willing to go along with the Sacramento-San Diego overnight train whose startup is set for the Apr 30 spring schedule change. Another plan worrying the railroad in that area of the country is CalTrans's proposal to extend the SAN JOAQUIN from Bakersfield to L.A. (Said an SP spokesman, "The SP is opposed to any further use of its facilities for passenger service".) The EL CAMINO runs six roundtrips a week--there is no (4:30pm) southbound departure on Saturdays, and no (5:45am) northbound departure on Sundays. Train proponents aim to attract at least 208 passengers per trip--the break-even point. The train will hold 473 seated riders.....

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THE MOST SERIOUS anti-Amtrak bill to be introduced in Congress has come from Congressman John J. McFall of Manteca CA. McFall, a powerful Congressman and head of the Committee that controls the DOT's pursestrings, was the person responsible for trying to cut Amtrak's supplemental appropriation last fall from $56.5 million to $8 million (see RTN, two Nov 1977 issues). Remember that it took a rare House rebellion to kick over his committee's report and vote Amtrak $18 million instead. Well, McFall is at it again, and this time he introduced legislation (on Feb 22) that would completely kill the Amtrak Board of Directors as we know it, with its consumer reps and all, and substitute a 3-person Board made up of the DOT Secretary, the Treasury Secretary, and one railroad man elected from the stock-holding railroads. Wouldn't that be a fine kettle of fish? But perhaps even worse, he wants to end Amtrak's status as a for-profit corporation and make Amtrak another government agency with a sharply reduced budget--$510 million for each of the next two fiscal years plus $100 million in capital expenditures each year. His bill would also sharply cut Amtrak executives' salaries, to put them in line with government pay--$66,000 for Amtrak's President (instead of the present $85,000) and a top of $59,500 for other Amtrak officials. A Washington Post article (Mar 8) states that McFall's bill comes closest to President Carter's thinking about Amtrak. It looks as if Carter cares not a whit about rail passenger service, and this seems to be the aspect of the matter that frightens Amtrak the most.....

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SOME COMPETING BILLS are being introduced, however. A bill by Senator Long of Louisiana would give Amtrak $550 million plus $200 million for capital expenditures. The capital expenditures are important because they permit Amtrak to order new low-level cars for the East, as well as other needed equipment. Congressman Harley Staggers of West Virginia is to introduce his own bill shortly. Hearings are now being held on Capitol Hill about Amtrak's Fiscal Year 79 funding, and Amtrak President Reistrup was testifying on Mar 10 when we last checked in to Washington. Many rail observers are tracing down clues that Congressman McFall's actions are inspired directly by the influence of the Southern Pacific, which the Sacramento Bee identified as one of his major campaign contributors. McFall is up for re-election this fall, and perhaps we will see a fall to remember.....

PULLMAN-STANDARD STRIKE drags on and on, with the union reportedly breaking off negotiations the week of Mar 6.....

SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE on Mar 2 approved the appointment of Frank H. Neel, the Georgia air conditioning man, to the Amtrak Board, by a 9-5 vote. The National Association of RR Passengers gave him his endorsement after NARP felt assured that he would support rail travel. Neel told questioners that he favors increasing passenger service, and looks favorably on long distance trains. The fact that he hadn't ridden American trains in a long time reflected the fact that they didn't run places he needed to travel, he said. Senator Griffin is said to be still opposed to Neel's appointment, and will demand a roll call vote in the Senate. The committee vote was split along party lines, with Democrats approving him and Republicans opposing. Other Board members now approved are ex-ICC attorney Ronald G. Nathan, Harry T. Nathan, University of Michigan law professor who replaces Joe MacDonald, and State Senator James Mills of California. Nathan and Mills attended the Mar 1 Board meeting. Washington sources report that Anthony Haswell's name is no longer coming up in connection with the Amtrak Board.....

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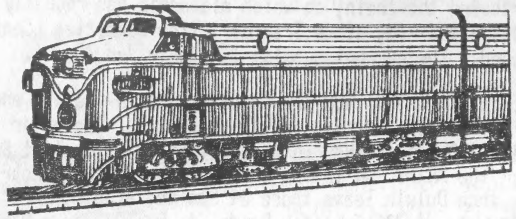
CHARLES E. BERTRAND, who left the position of Amtrak's VP and General Manager of the Northeast Corridor to become President and Chief Executive of the D&H Railway last Nov 15, died suddenly and unexpectedly the night of Mar 3, while operating a blower to clear snow from his driveway..... THE SHENANDOAH DERAILED about 20 miles east of Parkersburg early on Feb 21, with engine and all cars going off the track and remaining upright, and no injuries reported. Direction of the train's travel is not available..... THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, Amtrak train 183 southbound, derailed at 10:58pm on Mar 4 in the East River Tunnel in New York. The rear truck of the lead engine left the tracks, as did all the following wheels on the train, and roadbed and third rail were torn up for about 100 feet. The cars remained in line, leaning against the tunnel walls. There were no injuries reported. Amtrak dispatched a 7-car train to pick up passengers, who were delayed 1hr 52mins. The final car was rerailed at 9:42am on Mar 6, and the line completely cleared at 2:51 that day. About 39 Long Island RR trains were dealyed from 3 to 15 minutes the morning of Mar 6, due to the derailment. Total damage resulting was $57,400. Consist of the derailed train was engines 973 & 959, cars 21129, 21026, 21031, 21010, 21806, and 20118 (Amclub)..... NORTHBOUND AUTO-TRAIN carrying 503 passengers derailed near Florence SC early on Feb 24. There were reported minor injuries to 24 persons. The 43-car train, carrying 206 automobiles, may have been derailed by a broken locomotive axle, according to early police reports. A section of SCL track wasripped up as 20 cars left the rails.....

SANTA FE FREIGHT train eastbound near the summit of Cajon Pass five miles south of Hesperia CA crashed into a 130-foot deep canyon as the train hit track that had been washed out by rain and was totally unsupported. Four engines and 20 of 48 cars crashed and burned, injuring 2 operating crewmen and killing 2 crewmen who were riding as passengers. The accident blocked the line of the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, and Amtrak detoured the train from Barstow CA to Mojave, and thence on SP via Palmdale (the old SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT route) to Los Angeles. The westbound train arrived Barstow on time on Mar 7 and two buses took passengers making connections, on to L.A. The train left Barstow at 6:30am, arrived Mojave 7:55am, left Mojave at 8:40, and arrived L.A. at 12:30pm. The eastbound train of Mar 6 left L.A. at 8:10pm and arrived Mojave at 1:10am on Mar 7, arrived Barstow 2:46am, and left there at 3:06. Santa Fe built a shoo-fly track around the wreck scene, and the two trains mentioned were the only ones to detour. The detour over SP did not come about easily, according to reports we have. Despite the law, the SP, a Power Unto Itself, refused to allow Amtrak to detour the train on the line via Palmdale, probably because of its present sensitivity about the proposed use of the route for an extension of the SAN JOAQUIN. Amtrak asked the ICC to intervene, and the SP reportedly held its ground against that federal regulatory agency until the ICC said that the refusal would be "duly noted", and the SP backed down and allowed the detour. (Other regulatory agencies are more strict, comments a reader: the FCC would call out federal marshalls if a TV station didn't immediately respond to a directive).....

AMTRAK TOOK DELIVERY recently of a glass-box shelter for the Hinkle, Oregon PIONEER stop; but dueto inability to reach agreement with the UP on the location of the shelter, it is in storage at Boise, Idaho, while Amtrak pays storage charges on it there..... NORTH COAST HIAWATHA passengers reaching Seattle Mar 6 said their over-4-hour lateness was due mainly to Amtrak's trouble finding locomotives at Chicago. The late departure contributed much more than sub-zero temperatures from Minnesota to Montana..... FORMER AMTRAK OPERATIONS vice-president David Watts has just taken a job with Pacific Fruit Express. And the end of an era of sorts is said to have occurred with the recent departure of former VP-Marketing Harold Graham from Amtrak. "Prince Hal" was with Amtrak from the start--remember his early, enthusiastic, far-out ideas reported in the Saturday Review, that never happened under the Roger Lewis reign?..... THE BROTHERHOOD OF Sleeping Car Porters came to an end Feb 28 when it quietly merged with the Brotherhood of Railway and Airlines Clerks. It was founded Aug 25, 1925. The merger came on unanimous vote of the members..... SOUTH SHORE LINE has restored most weekend service that was cut due to cold weather conditions. And Chicago's RTA said that mass transit in the area was "abominable" this winter, and not all due to weather problems.....



THE DIESEL ENGINE as image of a tax shelter: Kidder, Peabody & Co. advertises tax shelter information in the Wall Street Journal, and includes this illustration as representing one investment area. The other four shown are film, oil wells, agricultural land, and apartments or condominiums..... SKI RESORT OPERATORS are pushing for a COAST STARLIGHT stop at Crescent Lake, Oregon, near Cascade Summit on the SP between Eugene and Klamath Falls. Amtrak has suggested that local governments cooperate in making the request for a stop. Deschutes County business interests have suggested that a stop be made at Chemult, where the BN (ex-GN "Inside Gateway") line joins SP from Wishram, Wash..... AMTRAK'S BOARD OF Directors on Mar 1 approved a formula by which Amtrak fares will rise about 2½% starting Apr 30. Amtrak's last fare increase, also 2½%, came last Oct 30..... THREE NY-FLORIDA TRAINS are now running again, with the return of the CHAMPION on Feb 26. The SILVER METEOR and SILVER STAR schedules were also modified. Amtrak noted that now there are six roundtrips daily in the NY-Richmond "corridor", with NY departures being as follows: HILLTOPPER 4am, PALMETTO 8am, SILVER STAR 9:15am, COLONIAL 1pm, SILVER METEOR 3:15pm, CHAMPION 4:45pm. Running time to Richmond is 6-7 hours. Amtrak announced an excursion fare of $87 from the Northeast to Florida, good until Jun 15, and intrastate Florida roundtrip special fares, $5 over one-way fare. Train 84, the SILVER METEOR was noted at Miami on Feb 26 running 18 cars at near-capacity. Amtrak began TV advertising in Florida in late Feb, brief spots including dining car shots, which some RTN readers praised. Reports are that the CHAMPION has been running about 16 cars, with big loads, after a very slow mid-Jan to mid-Feb. Actually, the train ran separately several days prior to Feb 26 because of heavy business. A reader comments, "Too bad it had to switch to the slower ex-SAL line, tho; I suspect it's at the SCL's insistence." The Florida DOT on Mar 6 said it wants Amtrak to re-route the CHAMPION to Sarasota instead of St. Petersburg. RTN reader Robert Clark says "Better yet, terminate both CHAMPION and SILVER STAR at Tampa; the bus connections to Sarasota and beyond are as good as any train service over that line could be. It's a light route with slow running. Termination at Tampa would allow better equipment utilization and reduced deficits." And there's a small but important change in Feb 26 Florida timetables, changing the Naples, Ft. Myers and Sarasota bus connection to Tampa, where the stations are a half-mile apart, comparedto several miles at St. Pete. This gives significant

improvements in connection times at Tampa. However, notes one observer, the CHAMPION leaves an hour too early from Tampa (10:20am)..... A TV REPORT on the FLORIDIAN, 30 minutes long, was seen in Orlando Mar 2. It included interviews with Reistrup, Taylor of Amtrak's Central Region, Haswell, and Jacobs. Reports say it explained the situation well, but left the uninformed public with the impression that all Amtrak long-distance trains are as bad. (A half-hour of free "negative advertising" for Amtrak, comments a reader)..... CHICAGO-SEATTLE TRAINS got a schedule change Mar 1, as noted earlier. The 4-times weekly EMPIRE BUILDER got 30 minutes added between Seattle and Ellensburg WA due to the Milwaukee Road re-routing. It leaves Seattle at 7am and arrives there at 8:25pm now. The tri-weekly NORTH COAST HIAWATHA got no end-point time changes, but minor adjustments at St. Paul/Minneapolis, where the new Amtrak station, in the Midway section between the Twin Cities, went into operation Mar 1. The ARROW HEAD began using Amfleet equipment Feb 27. The new St. Paul station had a grand opening ceremony Mar 4, attended by very large crowds. An Amcoach and Amdinette were open to the public. One sour note was the arrival at noon of the NCH from Seattle, over 12 hours late. Once again the state subsidy of the ARROWHEAD is up for vote, and newspapers report growing legislative hostility toward the train, on which ridership has recently fallen. Chairman Clarence Purfeerst of the state Transportation Committee (Senate) feels the train should be dropped. The current subsidy terminate Jun 30.....

* * *

AMTRAK ISSUED A Mar 1 timecard (form 10B) for the Chicago-Seattle trains, and a similar form 12B for the other trains using St. Paul/Minneapolis. The major change is in train 10, the TWIN CITIES HIAWATHA, which now leaves St. Paul at 8:15am and reaches Chicago at 5:45pm. The ARROWHEAD leaves St. Paul about a half hour earlier, and the Friday trains from Duluth leave there at 5pm and 2:30am, thru Mar 24. The new St. Paul station is at 730 Transfer Road, St. Paul.....

APRIL FIRST TRIP to Portland, Maine, listed here earlier, has been cancelled by the MBTA due to winter-related problems that disabled much equipment. The MBTA won't supply equipment for other fantrips until at least next fall.....

RAND CORPORATION PHYSICIST at the American Association for the Advancement of Science meetings in Feb proposed a coast-to-coast rail subway (L.A.-Dallas-N.Y.) with trains running in a vacuum tube using magnetic levitation, and making the run in an hour or less. Biggest hangup would be cost of building, estimated at over $250 billion..... AN OMINOUS WEEKEND was the last weekend in Feb, when three freight derailments that released toxic materials occurred--two in Tennessee and one in Florida, killing 20 persons. None of the wrecks occurred on Amtrak lines. The Florida wreck was determined to be caused by sabotage. It created very bad press for the railroads..... THE RUMOR MILL: Amtrak may radically alter schedules of the Seattle-Chicago trains Apr 30, to a daytime-out-of-Chicago timing and an early morning Seattle arrival, and a daylight arrival at Glacier and Yellowstone Parks. The TWIN CITIES HIAWATHA would then change to a nighttime run and would extend to Duluth. A reader asks: why do we publish rumors? We do so very deliberately, and we ask you to note that the word "rumor" with an item means just that. We publish them because frequently they prove to be true, and if they don't, they at least indicate what's going on in the minds of various rail planners and rail supporters, which is as much a part of the news as the actual changes that occur..... WORLD'S GREATEST RAILFAN E. M. Frimbo tells us that as of New Year's Eve of 1977 his total railway mileage traveled reached 2,481,438...

NARP HAS DESIGNATED Apr 17-23 as National Rail Passenger Week..... SPECIAL AMTRAK SHOPPER Tours from NY run 1st & 3rd Sats. each month starting Mar 18; Amfleet to Lancaster PA, group splits into shopping tour and Pennsylvania Dutch tour sections. Shoppers go to factory outlets in Reading via bus, others visit Penn. Dutch farm and Gettysburg via bus, return to NY via rail at 8:45pm.....

THE STATES OF NY, Ohio, Mass., Ill., & Mich. plan to replace the LAKE SHORE and NIAGARA RAINBOW with a single train that branches off at places along the way..

News in this issue is updated thru March 12 a.m.

LATEST AMTRAK RIDERSHIP FIGURES

Route	OCT	NOV	DEC
Metroliners	165,450	167,880	165,560
N. E. Corridor	437,150	467,930	437,880
NY - Philadelphia	277,340	277,330	270,650
Harrisburg - Philadelphia	72,920	74,720	79,810
Empire Service	54,670	61,980	65,510
Washington - Montreal	7,730	7,660	10,620
NY - Montreal	5,580	4,760	5,440
NY & DC-Chicago (BROADWAY)	16,860	16,760	19,950
NY & DC-Kansas City	13,700	15,750	18,080
NY & Boston-Chicago (LSL)	13,390	15,550	18,320
DC-Cincinnati-Chicago	8,750	10,600	12,300
DC - Tri-State	3,420	3,480	4,160
DC - Newport News	4,920	5,740	6,240
DC - Cincinnati	4,230	3,160	3,170
DC - Cumberland	23,080	23,340	21,280
NY - Miami	44,110	54,480	68,320
Chicago - Florida	9,000	8,690	12,130
Chicago - New Orleans	7,750	7,910	12,010
Chicago - Carbondale	18,020	20,500	21,650
Chicago - Detroit	32,210	36,270	38,850
Chicago - Port Huron	4,300	5,110	6,760
New Orleans - Los Angeles	5,790	5,770	8,310
Chicago - Los Angeles	18,980	17,590	25,080
Chicago - San Francisco	17,250	17,600	25,650
Chicago-Minot-Seattle (EB)	9,980	12,280	18,200
Chicago-Billings-Seattle (NCH)	5,450	7,340	11,200
Seattle - Los Angeles	23,350	26,480	35,120
Chicago - Houston	18,170	19,830	23,430
Chicago - St. Louis	17,730	21,230	25,500
Chicago - Laredo	2,970	2,400	3,430
Chicago - Milwaukee	24,820	23,620	25,560
Chicago - Minneapolis	9,130	8,400	10,510
Chicago - Dubuque	2,900	4,080	4,520
Minneapolis - Duluth	4,810	3,750	3,760
Chicago - Quincy	7,590	8,030	7,860
Seattle - Portland	15,870	16,480	14,260
Vancouver - Seattle	5,160	5,270	4,640
San Diego - Los Angeles	48,150	46,240	43,780
Oakland - Bakersfield	4,670	6,280	7,240
Salt Lake City - Seattle	6,240	8,930	11,350
Special Trains	4,080	5,320	- -

System ridership totals: Oct: 1,477,669 (passenger miles 282,391,040); Nov: 1,556,519 (passenger miles 294,300,929); Dec: 1,608,089 (psgr miles 361,641,473).

Here are the most recently released Amtrak ridership data--For Oct, Nov and Dec 1977. (See RTN 2nd Nov 77 issue for data of Jun thru Sep.) As noted last issue, the "negative advertising" surrounding Amtrak last fall and winter appears to have had its effect: ridership began dropping in October, with the system-wide percentage losses for each month (compared to the year-earlier month) being Oct 5%, Nov 3%, and Dec 5%. In spite of these declines, the year as a whole managed to register a 2% increase over 1976; coach travel was up 2%, first class travel was down 3%, and overall the increase was 2%.

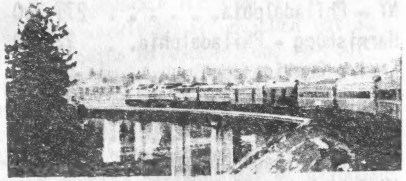
The decline was pretty general across the system but there were routes that showed increases. In December, for example, the following routes were up: Harrisburg-Philadelphia 16%, NY-Montreal 27%, DC-Newport News 17%, DC-Cumberland 33%, Chicago-New Orleans 3%, Chicago-Carbondale 30%, Chicago-Port Huron 3%, Chicago-Dubuque 10%, Chicago-Quincy 3%, San Diego-Los Angeles 5%.

Amtrak said that its very low advertising budget due to its financial squeeze hurt ridership, and indeed one notes that cases of special promotions did register big gains, e.g., NY-Montreal up 36% for the year as a whole.

CARS & CONSISTS

*The following sleeping cars are among those converted to electric power by Amtrak, and in the renumbering, change the 6 to a 9 in each: 2600 "Pacific Bay", 2617 "Pacific Island", 2620 "Pacific Mist", 2623 "Pacific Park".

*BLACK HAWK, train 371, Rockford IL Feb 17: engine 251 (F40PHR, ex-575); Amcafe 20046, Amcoach 21245, Amcafe 20030.



*NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, train 18, Seattle Feb 13: engines 265, 239 (F40PHRs), BN heater car 19, Atk heater car 672; cars 1094, SP 6652, dome 9466, 4891, dome 9813 "Silver Cup", 8093, 2677 "Silver Basin" (4 rte, 6 bdrm, 6 rte). Photo of train at Spokane Feb 13, by Gene Hines.

*NATIONAL LIMITED, train 30, Kansas City Mar 2: engines 401, 429 (E9As); cars 1040 (from Dallas), 1183 (from L.A.), 2150 "Silver Flower", 2305 "Surf Bird", 8301 (flat-end observation), 3800 (flat-end observation), 5441, 5431. Same Feb 22: engines 430, 433 (E9As); cars 1183 (from Dallas), 1194 (From L.A.), 2150 "Silver Flower", 8301, 5441, 5431, 6032 (to D.C.), (deadheads to Beech Grove:) 8324, 3221, 9252 "Silver Solarium" dome observation.

*SOUTHERN CRESCENT, SR train 1, Alexandria VA Feb 27: (SR equip't) engines 6916, 6915, 6906, 6900; cars 704, 842, Amtrak 5679, 2021 "Yadkin River", Amtrak 2614 "Pacific Heights", 832, 2352 "Crescent Moon", 3401 "French Broad River", 838.

*SILVER METEOR, train 83, NY Feb 26 (1st day of separate operation from CHAMPION) engines 4933, 919; cars 1401, 2689, 4576, 4596, 4410, 4417, 3317, 8014, 5627, 5467, 5680, 5477, 5457, 5414, 8063, 2786 "Putnam County", 2681, 2694.

*PATRIOT-SOUTHERN CRESCENT, train 171, NY Feb 26: engines 925, 909; cars 1306, SR2005 "Flint River", SR833, 3632 "Henry Knox", 21084, 21124, 21065, Amcafe 20533, 21184, 21130, Amclub 20671, power car 689.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The INTER-AMERICAN clearly is not very high on Amtrak's priority list... The route appears to have no great passenger market to tap. Politics created the INTER-AMERICAN; if Congress should balk at Amtrak's request for additional funds to maintain its existing system, politics will end the train as well."

--Craig Sanders in Chicago Tribune, Feb 19.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"When four hundred computers began their snowy journey to Port Jefferson on the Long Island railway..."

--News item heard on radio station WNED, Buffalo NY, during recent heavy snowstorms.

(Better that than to be auto-mated.)

16mm MOVIE CAMERAS FOR SALE: 2 war surplus 16mm (magazine-load) cameras now available. Electric motor drive, will operate off 12vdc, includes slightly telephoto 35mm lens. Ideal for hobbyist or a second, "remote" camera. $50.00 each, send SASE for more detailed info. P. Halbach, Box 26110, L.A. CA 90026.

Order your RTN First Rail Travel Yearbook now if you have not done so. Book will be off the press soon. $3.50 each postpaid (plus tax in California). Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

EXPRESS ADS

RTN READERS: SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDLY ADVERTISERS! Courteous, competent help in securing the best available accommodations on Amtrak, CN, CP, Princess Patricia, etc. Write GREAT WESTERN TOURS, 639 Market St., Suite 900, San Francisco 94105, or call us at (415) 398-2994. Pay by check or credit card--we make it easy!

DINING CAR DISHES, glasses, silver, cloth. Timetables, guides, Pullman, stationery, rules, metal items from 25 railroads. Long stamped envelope for list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kan. 67213. (Will buy large and small railroad collections.)

MEXICO RAILFAN FUN-TRAIN--October 8-21, 1978--"Trip of a Thousand Wonders (4.1% grades)" & Copper Canyon trip (open gondola). Private cars SOONERLAND & MISTLETOE plus Mexican sleeping cars. Mexico City Metro subway, shops, streetcars and SAHAGUN car factory. Guadalajara subway and shops. Ride on locomotive. Trip starts in Oklahoma (join anywhere). For full details and map, write: Howard Thornton, Midwest Travel Service, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City OK 73110

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY: 12" LP record features famous tripleheader steam excursion, CPR May 1, 1960. As realistic as standing beside the engineer! $5.95 + 50¢ postage & handling ($1 US). Railfans Unlimited, Box 8, Stn.D, Toronto, Ont. Canada.

CLINCHFIELD'S OLD NO. 5, by H. Reid. Full story of 4-6-0's reconditioning and use in excursion service. Published 1972, 32 pages, 35 photographs, paperbound. $2.75 postpaid. Old Dominion Chapter, NRHS; P. O. Box 8583; Richmond, VA 23226.

NEW lower USA rail pass 14 days $159, 21 days $215, 30 days $255 through May 15. Many other off-peak excursion fares available. Climb aboard your favorite train now, before it's discontinued or replaced by new equipment. Ask the rail specialists since 1952. Let's Travel Tours, 3780 Elizabeth St, Riverside CA 92516. (714) 787-8350.

Railroad buttons ideal for blazers, shirts, sweaters, uniforms, etc. Send $1.00 for sample and list. J. Lajoie, 22 Stevens, Methuen, Mass. 01844.

NORTHWEST RAIL IMAGES is discontinuing several of its duplicate color slide sets of Canadian subjects. If you would like views of passenger-carrying trains on 10 Canadian railways, send 35¢ promptly for a sample slide and list of all Canadian U.S. and Mexican slide sets. NRI, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

AMTRAK NEC 10/30/77 timetables with service cuts, not publicly distributed. Set of 3 (2 NY-DC,1 Ph-Hbg) $2 + long SSAE. Stringer, 132 Edgewood, Ardmore PA 19003.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads $1.25 per square inch. Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Mar 18: Montreal-Lyndonville VT-St. Johnsbury VT-Woodsville NH, RT on CPR. 350-person limit. Last such excursion before VIA takeover. $29.80, kids $14.90. Lv 8am. St. Lawrence Valley Rwy Soc, Box 400 Cote des Neiges, Montreal H3S 2S7.

May 26-30: Private Slpr SOUTHWEST LTD L.A.-Flagstaff RT, all-day boat trip Lake Powell, one-day float trip Colorado River, other features. $315 & up. Let's Travel Tours, Box 2768, Riverside CA 92516. (714) 787-8350.

Apr 28-29: 4449 West Reunion--reunion of riders of Amtrak 4449 trip in 1977, at Gold Coast Steam RR, Ft. Lauderdale FL. Info: Paul Wilson Sr., 2531 SW 31st St, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33312.

Apr 9: 4th Annual RR Extravaganza, for collectors & modelers, Dover Hi School, Dover NJ 10am-5pm. Tri-State RHS, 210 Perrine Ave, Piscataway NJ 08854.

One Fantrips listing is free. Rail Travel News, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.